

Barry County Compliance Review Report Issued March 2007

At its December 2004 meeting, the Michigan Emergency Telephone Service Committee (ETSC) voted to extend compliance reviews of 9-1-1 expenditures to Michigan counties "by request." These reviews would be for expenditures of funds generated through the provisions of the amended 9-1-1 Act, PA 32 of 1986 (PA 32). These voluntary *by request* reviews must come through proper channels and require an affirmative vote of the ETSC to proceed. County 9-1-1 revenues include: wireless revenues distributed to counties through the State; revenues collected through county 9-1-1 surcharges on land line phones; and dispatcher training funds distributed to primary public safety answering points (PSAPs).

Background

In July of 2006 the State 9-1-1 Office received a letter addressed to Dale Gribler, Chair of the ETSC from Mr. Ron Neil, Chair of the Barry County Central Dispatch Authority (BCCDA). The letter contained a request for the ETSC compliance review process to investigate several allegations that had been brought to the BCCDA in regard to financial and management issues of the Barry County Central Dispatch (BCCD). As the request sought a response as soon as possible, it was brought to the ETSC Executive Committee. Upon examining the issues, the members of the Executive Committee determined that the issues at hand were not within the scope ETSC's purview and were more appropriate for review by other resources.

In August of 2006 Dale Gribler, received a letter from Mr. Neil requesting an overall compliance review of the BCCD operations. The letter also requested that the team be comprised of as many members as possible that had not worked with BCCD Director Charles Nystrom. Upon receipt of the letter, the state 9-1-1 coordinator and the Chair of the ETSC brought the request to the ETSC's Certification Subcommittee in August 2006. At its August 29th, 2006 meeting, the ETSC Certification Subcommittee reviewed the information received from Mr. Neil and recommended a *by request* review of Barry County. Pending the ETSC's approval of the request, Certification Subcommittee Chair William Charon named subcommittee members Gribler, Temple, Hensel*, Leese, and Loeper to the Barry County Compliance Review Team. (Miller-Brown was included as administrative support). The years 2004, 2005, and 2006 (to date) were determined as the time period for the review.

It should be noted that during the ETSC meeting and Certification Subcommittee meetings in which the initial requests, the compliance review, and this report were discussed or acted upon, Mr. Charles Nystrom, who is a member of the ETSC and Certification Subcommittee was not present and was excused.

The ETSC accepted the recommendation of the Certification Subcommittee at its regular meeting on September 19, 2006. On September 22, 2006 a letter advising the BCCDA of its review was sent to BCCDA Chairman Ronald Neil. The letter requested the following information from BCCDA:

- The Barry County 9-1-1 plan
- A copy of the 2004, 2005, and 2006 (to date) 9-1-1 budgets
- Copies of agreements between the county and PSAPs (if more than one PSAP in the County)
- List of appropriate PSAP managers and their phone numbers
- Copies of budgetary reports or journals including the line items for 9-1-1 funds receipts
- Copy of indirect costs, if they are being charged to 9-1-1
- Copy of wireless training funds, revenue journal entries and expenditures
- Name of a point of contact person

The requested information was received by the State 9-1-1 Administrator's Office in a timely and organized manner.

Overview

Barry County 9-1-1 Central Dispatch (BCCD) receives the entire 9-1-1 call volume and dispatches for all emergency service providers within the geographical boundaries of Barry County. BCCD is administered through the Barry County Central Dispatch Authority established by the Barry County Board of Commissioners through Michigan's Urban Cooperation Act. BCCD's operating policy and procedures are established through the Barry County Central Dispatch

Technical Advisory Committee. There are extensive written policies for operations, including a policy on dispatching the closest car to calls for service.

Barry County implemented Enhanced 9-1-1 in 1992. The county became Phase I wireless 9-1-1 compliant in 2002. Phase II wireless 9-1-1 was deployed in 2004. BCCD dispatches for eight police departments, (including the sheriff department, the police departments for Hastings, Nashville, Barry Twp., Freeport, Woodland, and Prairieville, and the Hastings Post of the Michigan State Police), seven emergency medical services (EMS), and twelve fire departments. In 2005, BCCD received 18,919 landline 9-1-1 calls, approximately 3,875 wireless 9-1-1 calls, and 76,628 seven-digit calls. BCCD logged 27,107 dispatched incidents in 2005. BCCD employs eleven full-time dispatchers, four supervisors, an administrative assistant and a full-time director.

The primary funding source of BCCD's operations is a county-wide 9-1-1 millage. By vote the county citizens, Barry County collects a special millage of 1 mill (which is presently rolled back to .9845) to support its 9-1-1 services. Since the wireless 9-1-1 distributions began in 2000, Barry County has been certified as eligible by the ETSC and receives its portion of state wireless 9-1-1 funds. Additionally, BCCD receives wireless training funds.

The dispatch center, which became operational in 1992, is a stand-alone facility, which also houses the county's Emergency Management Operations Center (EOC). Consisting of about 7,876 square feet, the BCCD facility has secure entrances. It houses the communications room, supervisors' offices, restrooms, equipment, break and locker rooms, administrative office, and director's office. It was built and maintained with 9-1-1 millage funds.

The 9-1-1 phone system is capable of taking Phase I and II wireless 9-1-1 calls. The phone system interfaces with computerized dispatching (CAD) system and electronic mapping. There are PC-based radio consoles for the 800 MHz and VHF radio systems at each dispatcher position. BCCD also utilizes a mobile data computer (MDC) system and automatic vehicle locators (AVL).

Review Process

Meeting with BCCDA Chair Ronald Neil and Administrative Assistant Sue Rose on November 2nd, 2006

Ms. Rose reviewed the accounting documentation from 2004 through 2006 with the compliance review team members. She also provided the team with a summary report of each year. The summary report confirmed that each 9-1-1 revenue source was logged and tracked through its own individual accounting fund. Wireless revenue (Fund 980), wireless dispatcher training revenue (Fund 957), and millage Fund 205-402.

The accounting reports also showed that fund balance is carried over for each year (Fund 205-000-390). 9-1-1 monies are receipted in by the county treasurer's office and notice of funds are sent to BCCDA. Accounting and payroll are performed by the county, upon approval of the BCCDA. The operations of BCCD receive no general fund monies.

November 3rd, 2006 visit to BCCD dispatch center.

Telecommunicators Sue Chase and Supervisor Phyllis Fuller were on duty on the morning of the compliance review, a third telecommunicator was scheduled for early afternoon. Technical Supervisor Don Glasgow was on duty. The center has four full consoles. The consoles have radio functions, CAD, AVL, 9-1-1 call screens, and integrated mapping for wireless 9-1-1 calls and CAD. Latitude and longitude information from Phase II calls 9-1-1 wireless calls can be moved directly from the telecommunicators' call taking screens into the CAD and mapping. There is an emergency generator and all critical equipment is connected to the generator and a system UPS. There is an extended-time recorder that logged radio and telephone phone transmissions. Each dispatcher also has access to short-term audio play-back at their consoles.

Dispatch staff has close access to the restroom and a break area. Shifts are staggered to staff with peak work times. There are two to four dispatchers on duty. There is a supervisor on duty at most times, and in their absence on-call assistance for immediate issues is available.

Policies, procedures, official orders, and other manuals are kept in the center. Additionally, dispatchers have access to emergency numbers through an electronic database at their consoles. Routine warrants are entered into LEIN by the courts. PPOs and after-hours warrants are entered by BCCD. The dispatchers are trained for emergency medical dispatch through the National Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch (NAEMD) system. Pre-arrival instructions are given, however, in lieu of assigning specific priorities, telecommunicators provide the EMS responders with the key determinant descriptors. There is a well-organized communications training officer (CTO) program in place for the

training of new dispatchers. Additionally, there is a quality assurance program in place for the ongoing review of various dispatched calls.

November 2nd and 3rd, 2006 Review Team Additional Observation:

Although the initial request for review of specific allegations were not within the purview the ETSC, the review team met with several members of the dispatch center to inquire about policies, procedures and general operations of BCCD. During those discussions it became very apparent to the team members that the recent attention to management issues through various outlets (i.e. public meetings and media accounts) was affecting the morale of the telecommunicator staff. BCCDA Chair, Mr. Neil provided the review team members the opportunity to review the documentation of the BCCDA's inquiries and responses to those issues. The review team determined that board was properly addressing their internal issues in a timely manner. (See segment below on Preliminary Action).

Barry County 9-1-1 Funding Summary

Annual Operating Budget for 2004 = 1,615,086

Annual Operating Budget for 2005 = 1,599,500

Annual Operating Budget for 2006 = 1,627,102

Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2004 = 117,699

Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2005 = 127,548

Wireless 9-1-1 Payments 2006 = 105,466 (to date, November 2006)

9-1-1 Millage 2004 = 1,326,127 (.9421 mills)

9-1-1 Millage 2005 = 1,402,116 (.9845 mills)

9-1-1 Millage 2006 = 1,175,901 (.7500 mills)

Wireless 9-1-1 Funds

All wireless funds are maintained in a separate account 205-326-980. The funds are used primarily for capital improvements to the BCCD communications system. The expenses were reviewed and determined to be within the guidelines established by the ETSC. The expenses included CAD interface/maintenance and mobile data communications equipment maintenance.

Wireless 9-1-1 Expenses 2004 = 37,882

Wireless 9-1-1 Expenses 2005 = 239,369

Wireless 9-1-1 Expenses 2006 = 50,540

Training Funds

All wireless training funds are maintained in a separate account 205-326-957. Since the training distributions began in 2001, they have been used in full in accordance with the two-year time limit established by the ETSC. Based on documentation of spend down to September 2006, BCCD will be eligible for 2007 application. A review of the training expenses and payments confirmed that the funds have been used in compliance with the ETSC guidelines. A review of paid expenses established that BCCD uses its wireless training within the guidelines set forth by the ETSC for proper fund use.

Training Fund Distribution 2001 = 3,017

Training Fund Distribution 2002 = 5,529

Training Fund Distribution 2003 = 9,001

Training Fund Distribution 2004 = 5,006

Training Fund Distribution 2005 = 8,029

Training Fund Distribution 2006= 5,524 (May 2006 distribution)

Training Fund Expenditures 2001 = 3,017

Training Fund Expenditures 2002 = 2,342

Training Fund Expenditures 2003 = 3,824

Training Fund Expenditures 2004 = 7,393

Training Fund Expenditures 2005 = 13,249

Training Fund Expenditures 2006 = 4,141 (to Sept 30, 2006)

Preliminary Action

November 17th, 2006, the Barry County Review Team issued a preliminary memo stating that the team had found the expenditures in compliance with the statute and the ETSC's guidelines. Additionally, the memo stated that team believed the center was exceptionally well-run. The review team memo also included its observations on the effects that continued pursuit of previously addressed internal issues were having on the BCCD telecommunicator staff.

Findings and Final Summary

The Barry County 9-1-1 Plan was enacted in August of 1991. The Plan is current and in compliance with P.A. 32, as amended. The 9-1-1 plan and county agreements create a 9-1-1 Authority Board (BCCDA) and a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The BCCDA oversees the financial and administrative aspects of BCCD. The TAC is responsible for the policies and procedures guiding the day-to-day operations of BCCD.

Membership of the BCCDA includes: the sheriff, a representative of the Michigan State Police, two representatives of the townships' association, a county commissioner, a representative of the city of Hastings, a citizen at large, and a representative of the small cities/villages. The BCCDA meets monthly.

Membership of the TAC includes: a member of the Barry County Fire Fighters, the sheriff, the Hastings Police Department, an Emergency Medical Services Council representative, Hastings Fire Department, a representative of the Michigan State Police, and representative from a village or township police department. The TAC meets monthly.

Written policies are established for the day-to-day operations of BCCD. There is an extensive training program for new telecommunicators and established telecommunicators are sent to continuing training on a consistent basis. Telecommunicators are also routinely tested on the back-up systems. An annual review of the director is performed by the BCCDA. Annual goals are set for BCCD. Written five to ten-year long term planning and operational goals are also established.

Recommended Action:

- 1) While there is a quality assurance program in place, a system of regular annual performance evaluations of each telecommunicator and supervisor should be developed. Evaluations should be based on objective standards consistent with the duties assigned to various dispatch personnel.
- 2) The current set of policies, procedures, and official orders should be updated and streamlined. While the current policies and related manuals are expansive, they are cumbersome as a resource for telecommunicators to readily access and utilize. Additionally, some policies are outdated and need updating to reflect current procedures.

The accounting system in place at Barry County properly keeps the 9-1-1 funds separate from other county funds, both at the revenue and expenditure side. Interest is collected on the principal and transferred to the respective 9-1-1 accounts in a timely manner. In accordance with P.A. 32, all Barry County 9-1-1 funds are used only for allowable 9-1-1 expenses.

Based upon the documentation requested, made available to, and reviewed by the committee, Barry County and its 9-1-1 operations are in compliance with the requirements of P.A. 32, as amended. In closing, the review team found Barry County Central Dispatch to be a well-run system, both technically and operationally. The recommendations cited above are not reflective of shortcomings in that system, but are offered as improvements to the outstanding program currently in place.

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* Due to scheduling conflicts Ms. Hensel was unable to participate in the review.